

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A process for producing spherical composite cured melamine resin particles, comprising ~~the following steps (a) and (b):~~

~~(a) — a step of reacting a melamine compound with an aldehyde compound in an aqueous medium under a basic condition in the presence of a suspension of colloidal silica having an average particle size of 5 to 70 nm to produce an aqueous solution of a precondensate of water-soluble melamine resin; and~~

~~(b) — a step of adding an acid catalyst to the aqueous solution produced in the step (a) to separate out spherical composite cured melamine resin particles.~~

2. (Original) The process for producing spherical composite cured melamine resin particles according to claim 1, wherein the colloidal silica is present in an amount of 0.5 to 100 parts by weight based on 100 parts by weight of the melamine compound.

3. (Original) The process for producing spherical composite cured melamine resin particles according to claim 1, wherein an aqueous silica sol is used as the colloidal silica.

4. (Currently Amended) The process for producing spherical composite cured melamine resin particles according to claim 1, further comprising ~~the following step (c):~~

~~(c) — a step of mixing the spherical composite cured melamine resin particles produced in the step (b) with inorganic compound particles having an average particle size of one fifth (1/5) or less based on that of the spherical composite cured melamine resin particles directly or in an aqueous medium to coat the surface of the spherical composite cured melamine resin particles with the inorganic compound particles;~~

wherein the inorganic compound particles have an average particle size of one fifth (1/5) or less based on an average particle size of the spherical composite cured melamine resin particles.

5. (Currently Amended) The process for producing spherical composite cured melamine resin particles according to claim 1, further comprising adding a water-soluble dyestuff in the step (a) and/or the step (b) during at least one of:

reacting the melamine compound with the aldehyde compound; and

adding the acid catalyst to the aqueous solution.